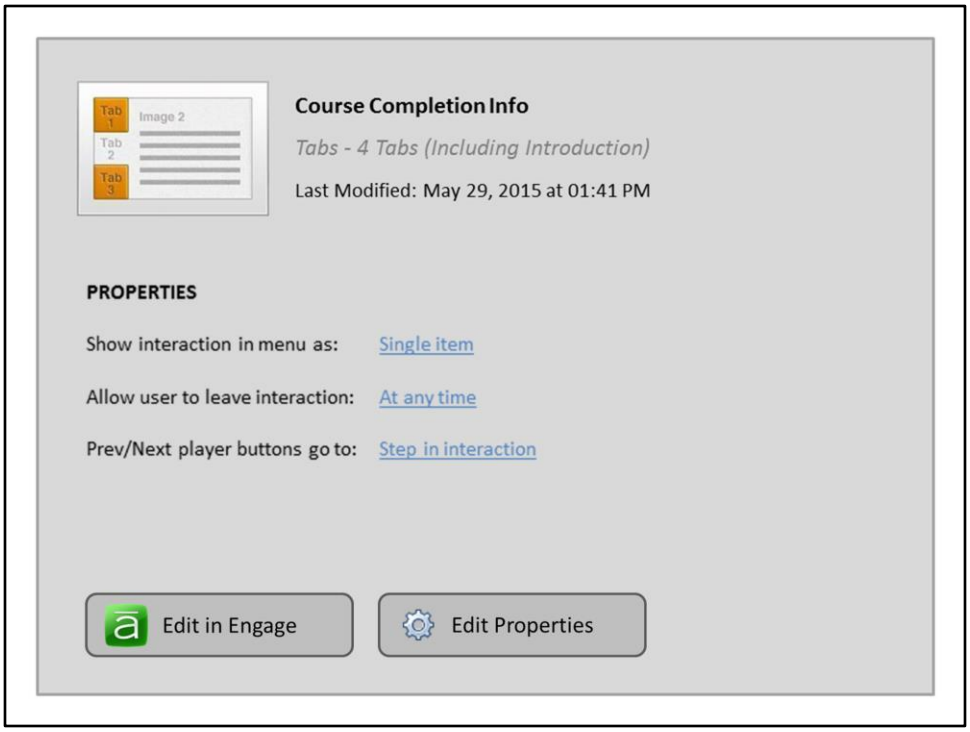
Welcome to the Risk Communication lesson. This is the second of four lessons in this series. If you have not listened to the first lesson, please go back and do so before continuing. Note that these lessons emphasize the role of communications with the public. For communications that focus on partners and customers, please see the Crisis Communications Modules.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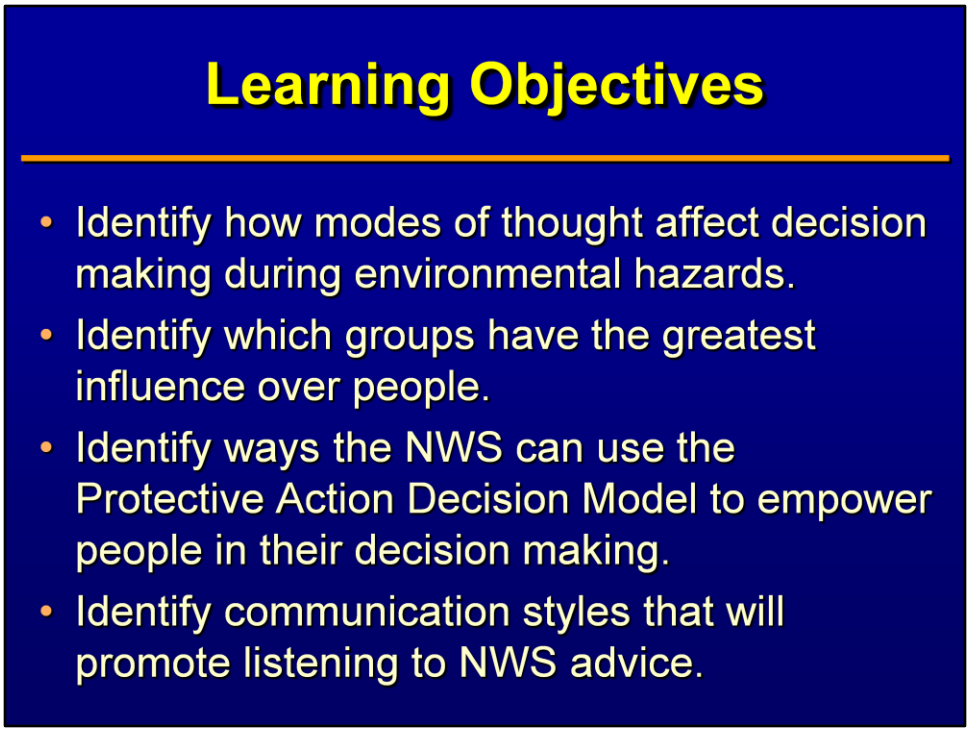
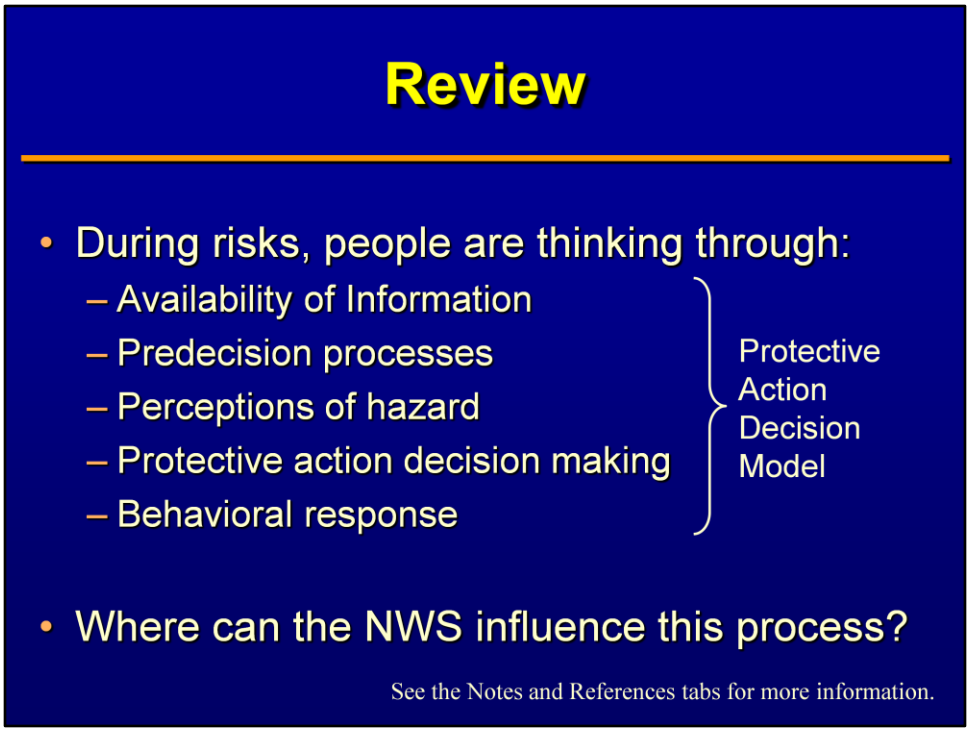


This lesson will build upon the previous lesson that discussed how the public assesses a risk and decides what they should do about it. In this lesson, we will examine the Protective Action Decision Model and the social influences we discussed to identify ways the National Weather Service can focus their communication efforts.

We will first look at how fast, slow, and oscillating modes of thought affect how well people make decisions during environmental hazards and disasters. The relationships that have the greatest influence on us will be identified along with various ways the National Weather Service can take advantage of the Protective Action Decision Model to empower people when they make decisions. Remember that the goal of empowering people is that they can quickly make the best decision that maximizes their safety. Once we discuss that message content, we will then identify the communication styles that will promote the public to listen to and consider the provided guidance.



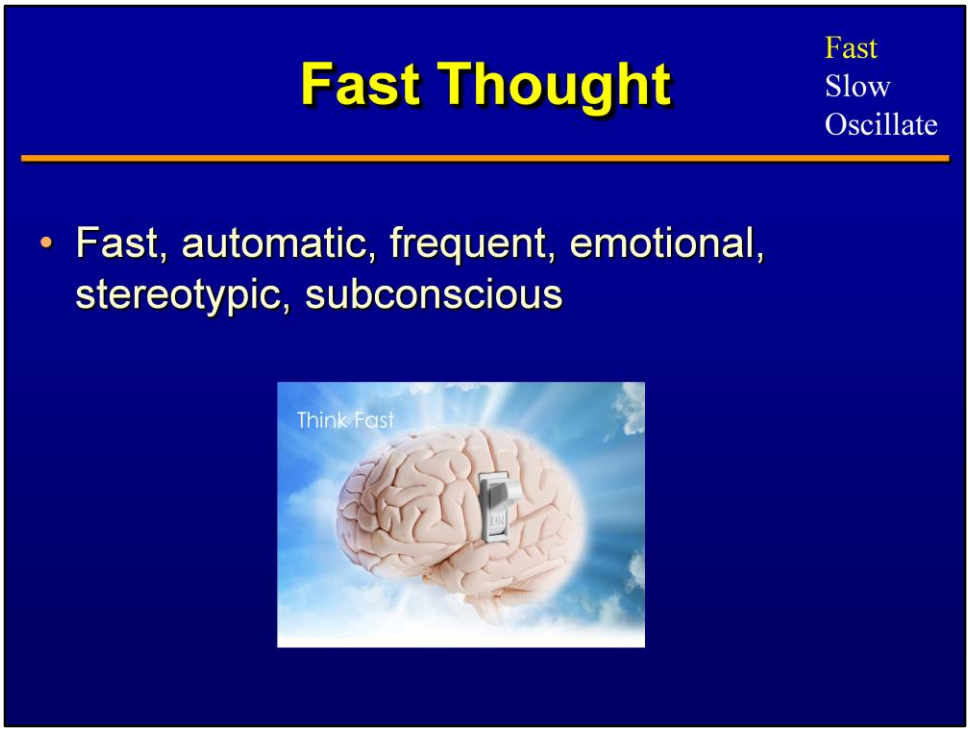
Let's review a little before moving ahead. In the previous lesson, we used the Protective Action Decision Model as a guide to identify how people assess a risk and make decisions when threatened. This model is intended to be general enough so that it applies to an array of natural and man-made threats.

We said that when a person first hears about a risk, they will typically seek more information. What they find depends on the availability of information and their comprehension of its meaning and importance. People will want to know the answers to several questions. What is the threat? How severe is it? What is the likely magnitude of damage? Where is it relative to my position? What direction and speed is it moving? As they go through the predecision processes and begin to answer these hazard perception questions, they begin to project their future status. People attempt to estimate where they believe their location will be relative to the risk, depending upon what they intend to do. They also need to think through what resources they have that will maximize their safety. Also, what might hinder their being able to use those resources? How long will it take them to get there? What are other people doing around them? What responsibilities do they have to friends, family, or organizations during this event? Finally, based upon all the information gathered, the person will decide whether they need to change their course of action and what they need to change it to.

All of this leads to the question of where the National Weather Service can influence these decision-making steps to help empower people to make better decisions. Keep in mind that a completely informed person can still choose to make a bad decision, and there is nothing we can do about that. But, given that information is often difficult to find when the risks of high impact weather are the

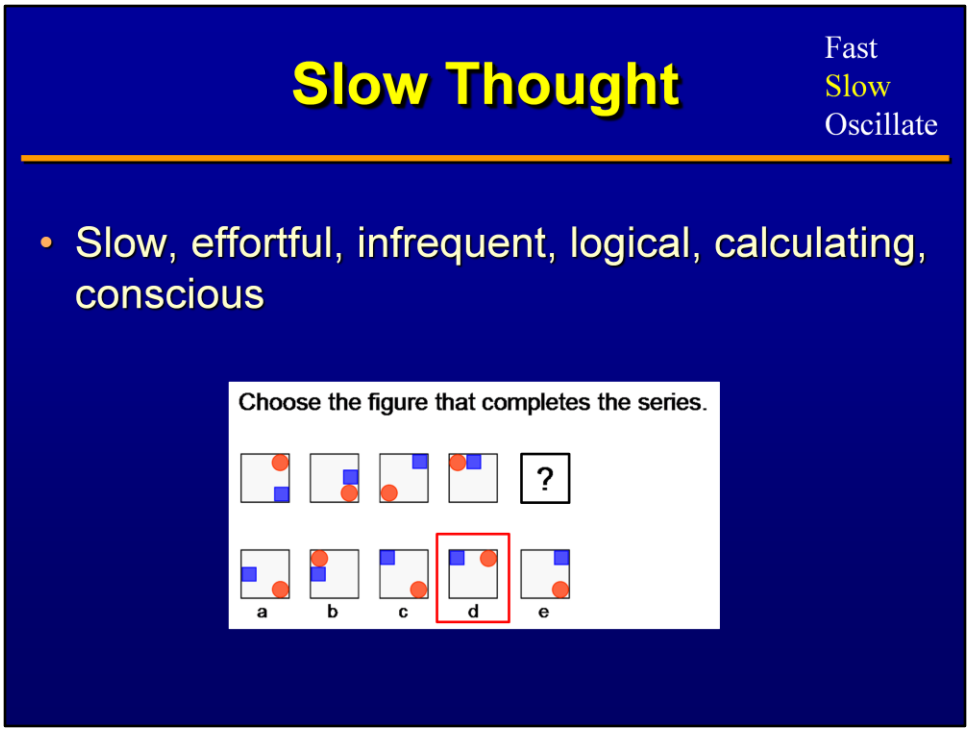
greatest, it is helpful to make sure people know how to best perceive their situation and how to act on it. What is presented here is one way to look at this information. You are encouraged to discuss best practices within your office to determine the specific applications to your audiences.

[The original PADM paper can be found by clicking on the Resources button on the top right of the player.]



We discussed in the previous lesson that it is important to gain and maintain trust from the public. But recall that the purpose of that trust is so our communications can help to empower the public to make the best decisions in the presence of a significant weather event. If a threat is imminent, and their time to make a decision is short, there is a much higher likelihood that they will make a good decision, but not necessarily the best one.

Consider that one reason for this are the two modes of thought that people have. There are fast and slow modes of thinking. The fast mode of thought is the type that occurs quickly, is automatic, and occurs in the subconscious. Most of our decision-making processes are on this level. In fact, most of our decisions are not thought out fully in an attempt to arrive at the best possible outcome. Instead, we think very quickly about what we should do in order to come up with a decision that is "good enough" and will likely work. We are willing to sacrifice brainpower to arrive at a satisfactory solution, even if it is not the best solution.



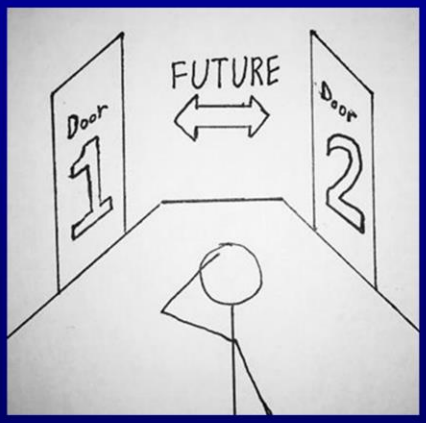
The second mode of thought uses logical reasoning. By using more logic to calculate our decisions, we can come up with better solutions. But it is very slow, takes a lot of effort, and just takes time to go through. In this game, it takes time and effort to detect the pattern being shown and to determine which option is next in the series. During high risk events, it takes time and effort to evaluate all that is happening and determine what we should do next. We are often under a time constraint, and just don't have the time to think long enough to come up with the best decisions. In the end, we rely on whatever subset of information that happens to come to mind in the moment.

Are you still analyzing the game to see why option D is the correct answer? If so, this shows the effort that is involved compared to subconscious, fast-thought decision-making. This is why it is important to encouraging people to think through their plan of action before an event happens and they need to make those decisions quickly. Thus, we will want to plan out our social media efforts that take place in the days and hours before a significant weather event begins.

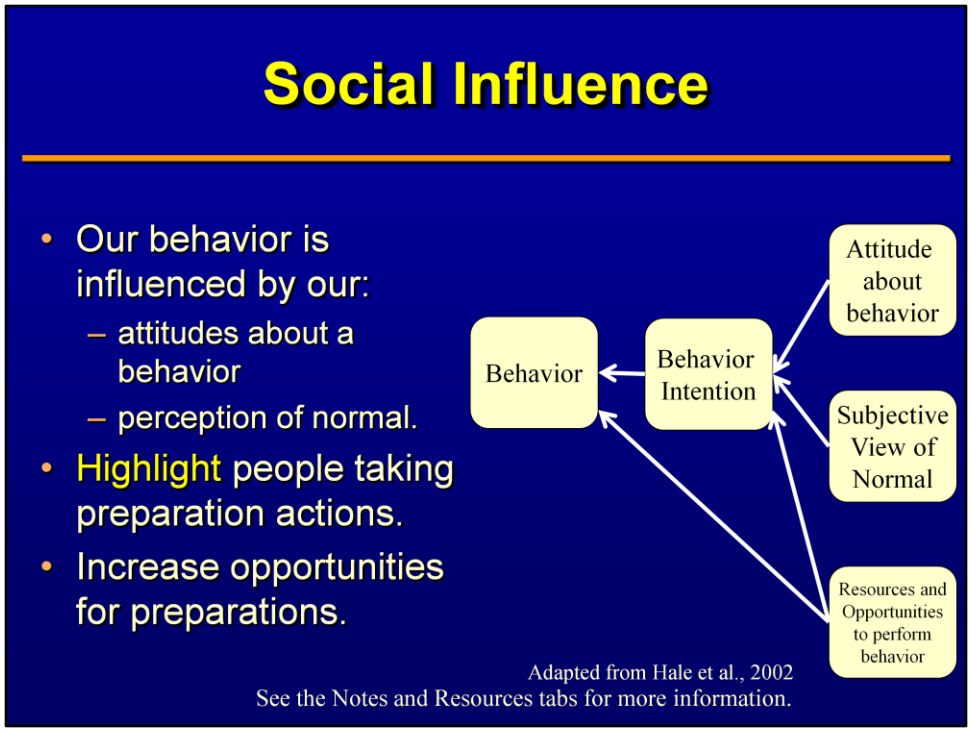
Oscillating Between Decisions

Fast
Slow
Oscillate

- People tend to oscillate between what actions to take. This increases with difficult decisions.

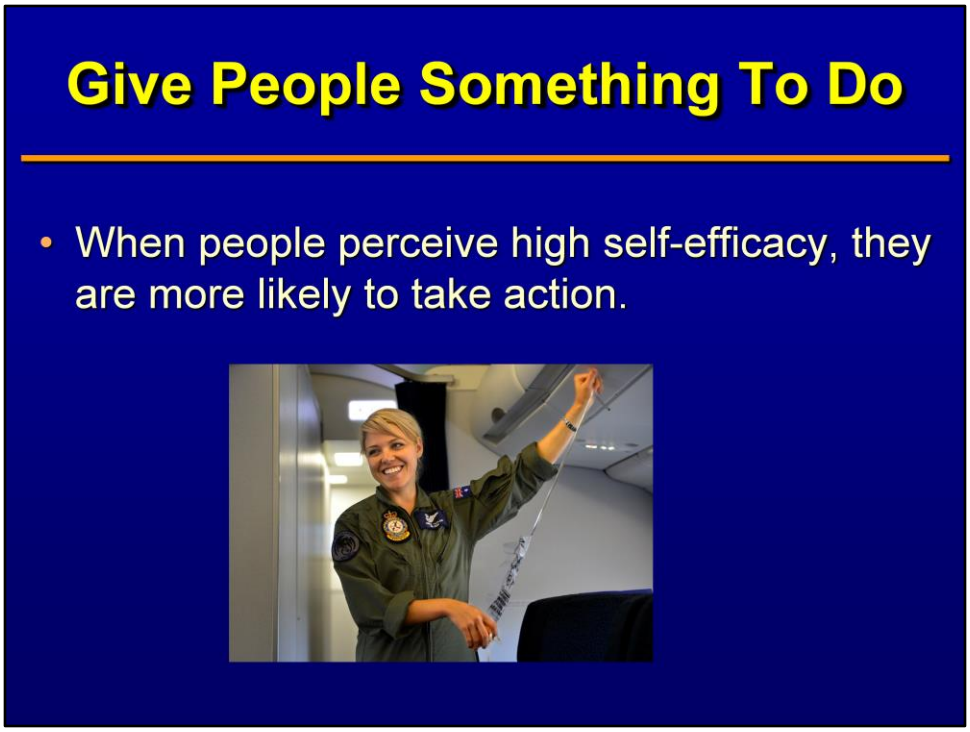


To make matters worse, there are times when people begin to lean towards an action they should take, but lack the confidence in their decision, so they continue to evaluate their situation without doing anything. Social science research shows people will often think about the option they were shying away from to see if they should indeed reject that option. But in doing so, that unfavored option will begin to look better over time as they continue to think about it, so they start to favor it and reject their original decision. But then the process can then occur in the other direction just as easily and it becomes difficult to settle on which action is most appropriate. Continue this forward, and people will oscillate between which decision they should make, especially as the danger increases or the time they have to make the decision decreases. This oscillation further shows the consequences of effortful decision making that takes place when people don't have a plan ahead of time. Having thought out their actions beforehand, people will be much more likely to recall this beneficial information when the risk type occurs. This underscores the importance of confidence in knowing the best actions to take going into the event and trust with the authorities giving the advice.



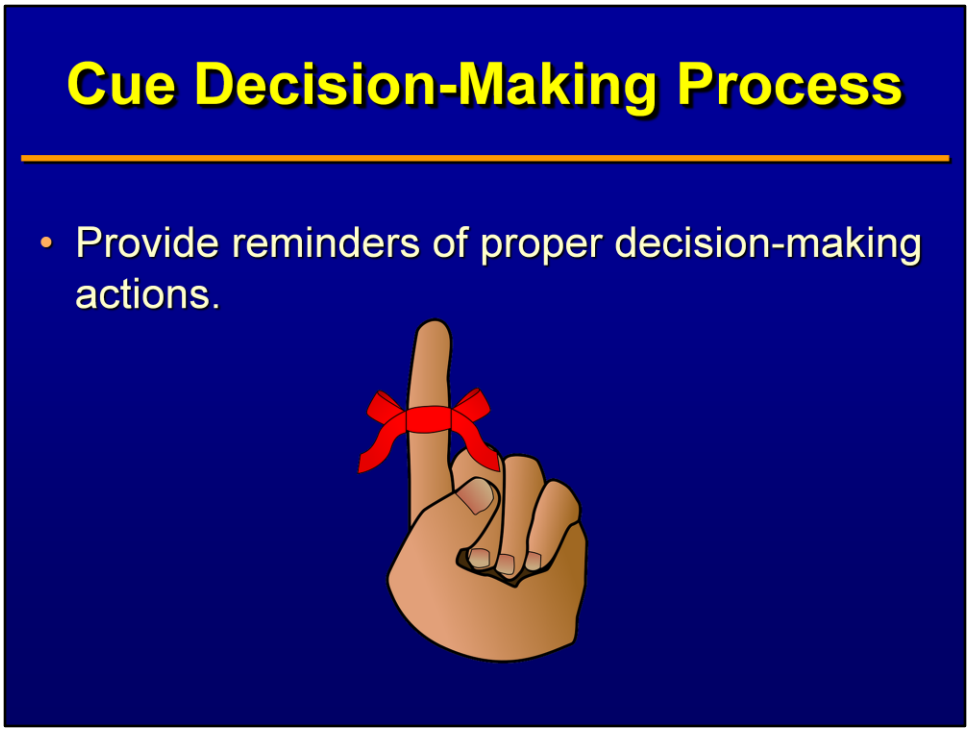
When we discussed social cues in the previous lesson, behaviors were said to be influenced by not only personal attitudes about each option for safety, but also perceptions of what society, or at least their peers, believe are normal preparation and safety actions for a particular threat. Because the National Weather Service serves a wide audience, our communications have the potential to reach many people and influence what preparation actions are perceived to be normal. Examples that might influence this area include showing pictures of what safe places look like for particular threats or showing people taking shelter in those areas. This will help not only educate the public on how to recognize what opportunities they have that will provide safety, but will promote those areas as being normal actions to take. An interesting fact is that when you promote an action that people agree with, sharing relevant statistics will help ensure people will take that action. But, when you are talking to opponents of your proposed action, they are more likely to be influenced to take up that action after hearing anecdotal stories. These stories, then, may prove helpful to save lives.

[Chart adapted from Hale, Jerold L., Brian J. Householder, and Kathryn L. Greene, 2002: The Theory of Reasoned Action. *The Persuasion Handbook*, James Price Dillard and Michael Pfau, Ed., Sage Publications, Inc., 259-286. More information about *The Persuasion Handbook* can be found by clicking on the Resources button on the top right of the player.]

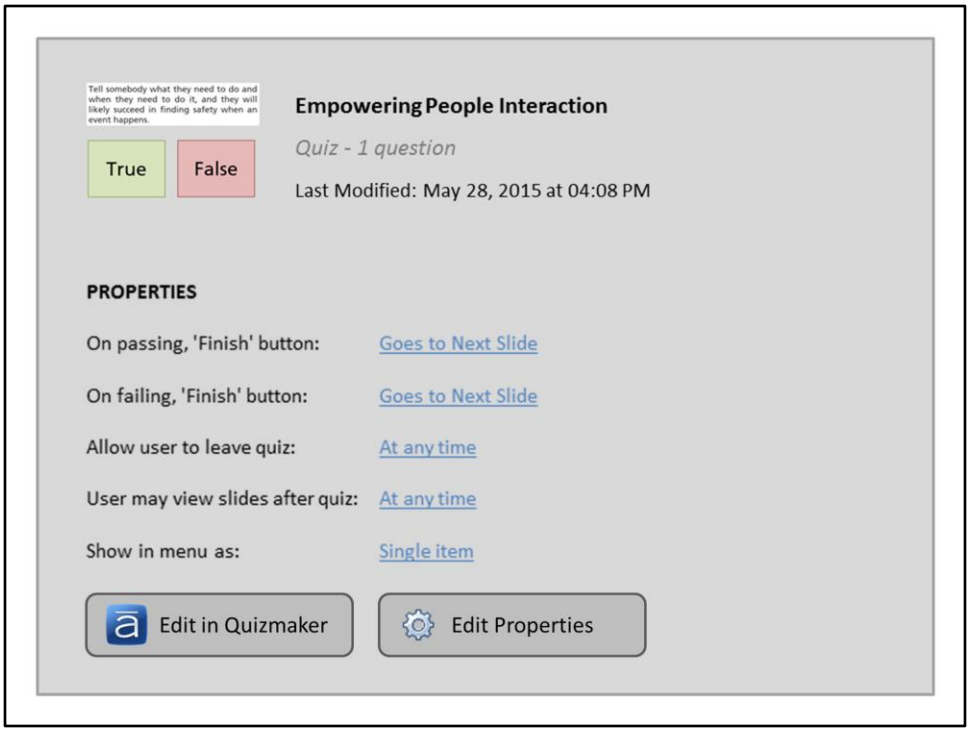


So far, we have said that, between significant weather events, we should communicate good preparedness actions and enable people to recognize their opportunities for safety**.** Getting people to recognize which places can provide safety can help build their confidence about what they should do and motivates people that they can perform the action. This self-recognition of safety and confidence in their ability is what empowers a person's ability to act.

When you think about it, that is what the pre-flight safety talk on airplanes is all about. It is meant to give passengers awareness of safety devices and exits that are available on the airplane. The talk also shows passengers how to use those devices. The intention is to give passengers the confidence to locate and use the safety devices, and make them more likely to use those resources if they become necessary. We want to accomplish similar goals when we communicate about safety during significant weather. We want people to be more likely to take action when they need to.



Our messages between events is an attempt to facilitate, first, the public's understanding of what options they have when seeking safety and, second, to help people think through what they will most likely need to do to reach that place of safety within their typical day. In the hours before a significant weather event begins, it is important to provide reminders of the actions you have been promoting between events. This is important because we cannot know everyone's situation and tell them what to do. When a high impact event is about to begin, cueing the decision-making processes we advocate helps facilitate the public thinking through their responsibilities and what it will take to get to a place of safety on that particular day. Cueing these processes early can set into motion a person's decision-making processes for the rest of the day and can help them make better decisions when the risk event materializes.


Tell somebody what they need to do and when they need to do it, and they will likely succeed in finding safety when an event happens.
True
False
Empowering People Interaction
Quiz - 1 question
Last Modified: May 28, 2015 at 04:08 PM
PROPERTIES
On passing, 'Finish' button:
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Allow user to leave quiz:
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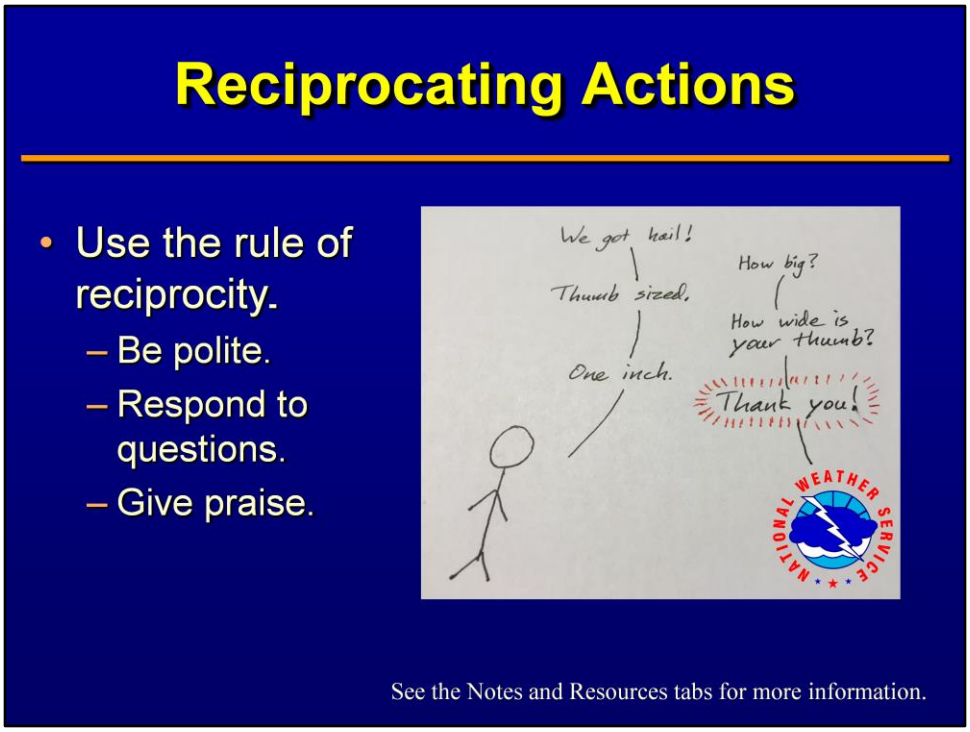


Social media has the potential to be an important tool in accomplishing these goals. Early research has shown that people may feel more in control and productive when they get information from these two-way conversational platforms as opposed to unidirectional platforms like TV, radio, or other websites. This is likely because the person feels involved in both the conversation and the solution. Being involved in the conversation also enhances the effect of the influence of peers when making decisions. Family and peers generally have more influence than news organizations or authority figures. With this in mind, remember that social media is best used if you communicate as though you are talking to people and not just typing on a computer. This means that you need to reciprocate the actions of others. This includes being polite to people, responding to their questions, if possible, and giving praise where it's due. Even if you can't do this during the event, go back and do this after the event. Reciprocating their communications to you will increase their trust in you. They will also be more likely to listen when you communicate to them in the future.

[Much of the content from the next few slides has been adapted from the Persuasion Handbook. More information about *The Persuasion Handbook* can be found by clicking on the Resources button on the top right of the player.]

So far, we have discussed encouraging people to think about their decisions prior to events, highlighting appropriate actions as being normal, increasing people's confidence in what to do, and cueing those decisions. All of these topics focus on the content of our message. Now, let's shift gears and focus on the style of our communications. The overall goal of this section is that we lead and facilitate understanding of risks and appropriate safety actions, not to direct and command people's actions.

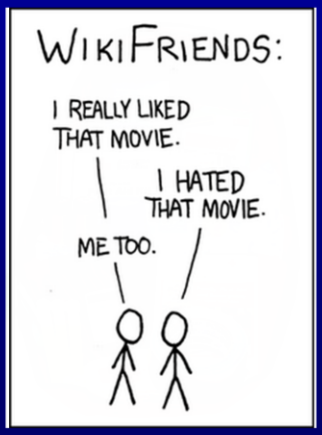
If you have ever tried to tell someone what to do and then have them react negatively, you will know that you cannot expect to just boss people around. Remember that each member of the public has the final say on their actions. Any message that is intended to change someone's behavior might be perceived by that person as being a threat to their individual freedom. People have the tendency to react to threats to their freedom by either ignoring the message, demeaning the source, or performing undesired behaviors just to demonstrate their ability to choose. Generally, this fight is given up if you are likely to be harmed or killed or if the threat to freedom is small.

For example, someone who is asked if their pen can be borrowed will typically grant the request. Pens are cheap so the perceived threat to their freedom is small. When they are asked if their car can be borrowed, the person may hesitate a little more. Cars are expensive and the consequences of an incident are very high, so the threat to their freedom is very large. If the request to borrow their car is accompanied by a serious physical threat, the person may be quicker to grant the request because of the increased potential for harm.

So where do we draw the line in our communications in how authorative we speak? This is more of an art than a science and involves a discussion over the details because the line likely depends on the context of the situation. During the event or immediately preceding the event, our goal to save lives and property compels us to speak authoritatively. But between events, overly authoritative speech can backfire. During routine operations, asking for a few small things between events that are small threats to their freedom are less likely to lead to a negative reaction.

Implicit Communication

- "Don't tell me what to do!"
  - Talk as a peer, not a government authority.
    - "Be a PEER, not a PARENT!"
  - Be implicit, not explicit.



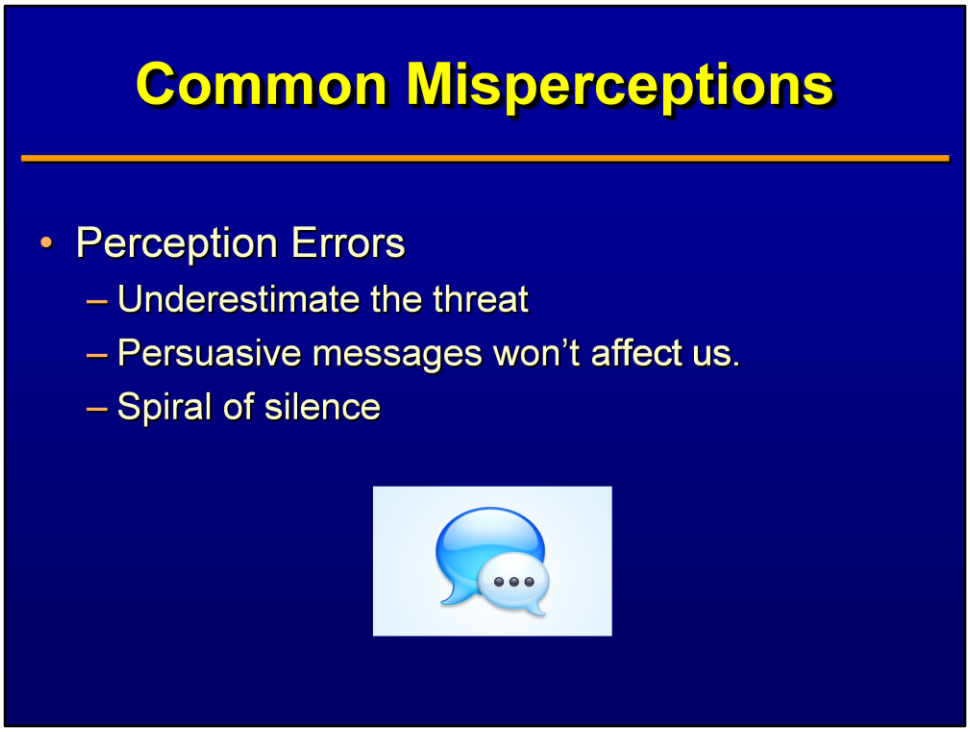
xkcd.com/185

When facing potential losses of freedom, persuasion research shows that hearing statements from a peer is much more influential than hearing statements from an authority. Peers directly influence a persons' perception of what the normal actions of society are, which strongly weighs into that person's later decision-making. Because communication from peers is so influential, social media provide ideal platforms for promoting trust with the National Weather Service. This is also why we need constant reminders that the reason social media works is because it is based on peer-to-peer communication. Thus, the same unwritten social rules that govern friendly communication also applies to social media. The mantra here is to "be a peer, not a parent."

A key difference between communication amongst peers from that of authorities is the use of implicit statements. When a friend suggests what they are likely to do, especially in a positive, active voice, it implies that you would be better off if you did the same. In contrast, authorities are often guilty of explicitly telling people what to do and threatening negative consequences for not obeying. If we provide these positive, implicit statements, it can help people believe the idea to act was their own, even if it was cued for them, and it can increase the belief that they have the power and resources to take action. Aiding this belief is known as increasing their perception of self-efficacy, and if you can do it they are much more likely to take the appropriate action. So, for example, instead of telling people what they should put into some preparedness kit, you can ask people what essential items are in their kits and share and retweet the best items.

Remember, if it is obvious that you are trying to be persuasive, people may not listen. But speaking as a peer and making suggestions through implication can aid people in believing they are part of their

own solution. In addition, friendly communication shows that you care about the community. And when you do speak authoritatively, it gets noticed. This pattern of communication is how trust is formed.

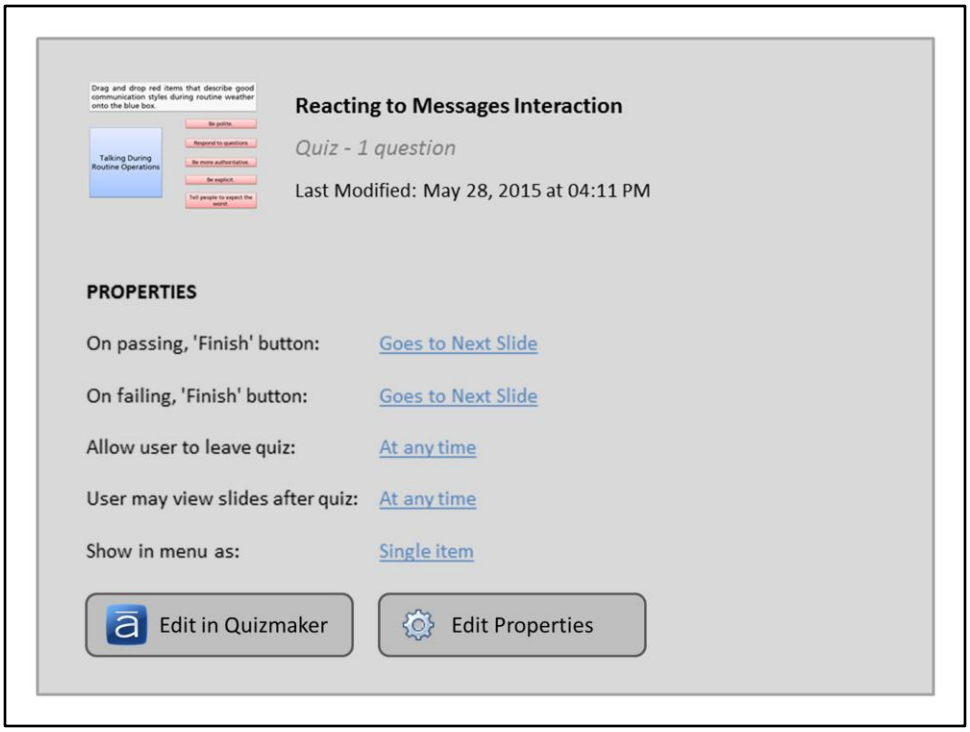


There are a couple of common errors in how people perceive they are affected by communication, and these errors are difficult to overcome. A major error is that we generally underestimate the threat to our current situation. In other words, we mistakenly believe that our outcome will generally be better than that of those around us. Preparedness helps to overcome this effect.

Another error is that we believe persuasive messages attempting to get us to take action will not affect us as much as others. We want to know that we are in control of our own decision. Speaking as a peer helps to combat this effect.

Another common issue is what is known as the "spiral of silence." Lets say you think the majority of people agree that getting in a ditch is the best way to avoid a tornado, but you believe the best thing is to seek shelter first and only use a ditch if you have to. You might be more likely to stay silent than to extend your thought, even though you are correct, because you believe most people will disagree. The National Weather Service can help influence the perception of normal actions to take by consistently informing people of appropriate actions and highlighting people who take those actions. We can work to help people be confident that they know what the proper preparatory actions are. This confidence may help people act appropriately in spite of common, but less appropriate, actions of their peers. Again, preparedness and confidence in what you know helps to combat this effect.

To summarize this section on communication styles, our overall goal is to lead and facilitate understanding of hazards and appropriate safety actions, not to direct and command people.


Drag and drop red items that describe good communication styles during routine weather onto the blue box.
Be polite.
Respond to questions.
Be more authoritative.
Be explicit.
Tell people to expect the worst.
Talking During Routine Operations
Reacting to Messages Interaction
Quiz - 1 question
Last Modified: May 28, 2015 at 04:11 PM
PROPERTIES
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On failing, 'Finish' button: Goes to Next Slide
Allow user to leave quiz: At any time
User may view slides after quiz: At any time
Show in menu as: Single item
Edit in Quizmaker
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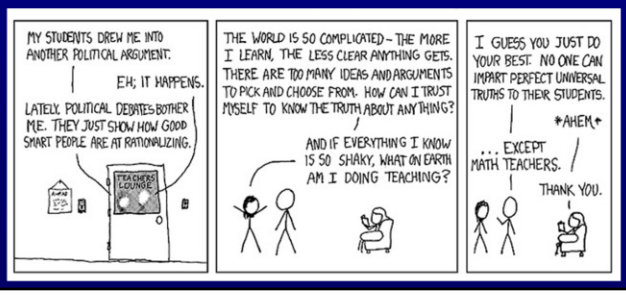
Show Confidence

- Convey certainty and confidence on high-impact days.
- Don't use probabilities on low-impact days.
  - "Chance of flurries." vs "There will be flurries."



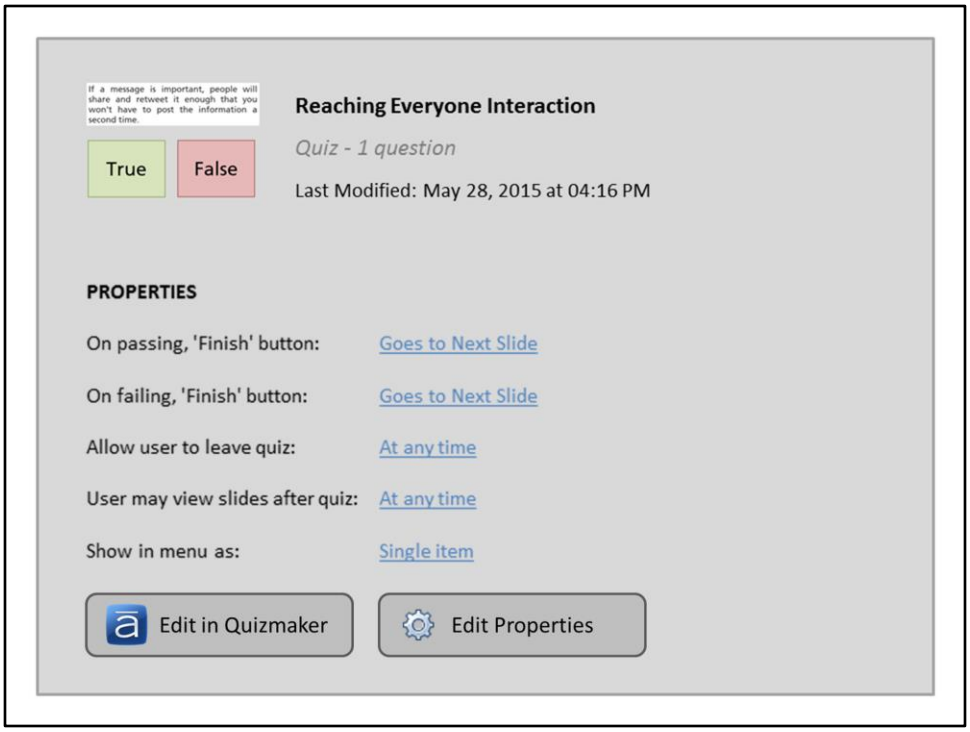
In all things, show confidence in what you are saying. Even when discussing probabilistic forecasts, try to express the forecast using the term "certainty" rather than "uncertainty" or "probable" or other words. A best practice is to reserve relative probabilistic words such as "almost certain", "probable", "likely", "unlikely", and "doubtful" for moderate and high impact events. If the event is forecast to have low impacts, leave the probabilistic words out of your communications. Don't tell people there is a "slight chance of flurries", or a "50% chance of drizzle". Just say there will be flurries, or there will be drizzle, or there will be light winds. Of course, determining the relative impact of events will depend on feedback from your partners.

The first step of the Protective Action Decision Model involved the need for information to be available. Without this, it is difficult for people to make the best decisions on how to act. So, how do we reach everyone? The key is to repeat the message multiple times on multiple platforms in multiple ways. We know that each medium reaches a different demographic. So, the same message can be distributed on TV, radio, the internet, multiple social media platforms, and any other communication medium we have access to. As a part of repeating the message, different iterations can be aimed at different audiences, including those with disabilities, poorer communities who might lack proper shelter or transportation to leave quickly, and those speaking different languages. These vulnerable communities are especially likely to need additional time, and perhaps additional information to be communicated, to assure their needs are addressed.

Knowing that we are more influenced by people who we come in contact with than by media messages alone, we need to reach those who will tell others. So, if we can reach parents, we will more likely reach their kids. If we can reach siblings, they will tell their brothers and sisters. This may require different ways of communicating messages. In all of this, we need to emphasize positive outcomes that are associated with good behaviors in significant weather. Sometimes, specific procedures and knowledge will need to be emphasized. Other times it may only need to be cued for people to decide to act.

Remember that you can even repeat your message multiple times on the same platform if it is important enough. Perhaps there are people who will see it the second time who missed it the first time around. Just make sure the wording is different enough that it doesn't make you look like a

robot.


If a message is important, people will share and retweet it enough that you won't have to post the information a second time.
True
False
Reaching Everyone Interaction
Quiz - 1 question
Last Modified: May 28, 2015 at 04:16 PM
PROPERTIES
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On failing, 'Finish' button:
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Allow user to leave quiz:
At any time
User may view slides after quiz:
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Show in menu as:
Single item
Edit in Quizmaker
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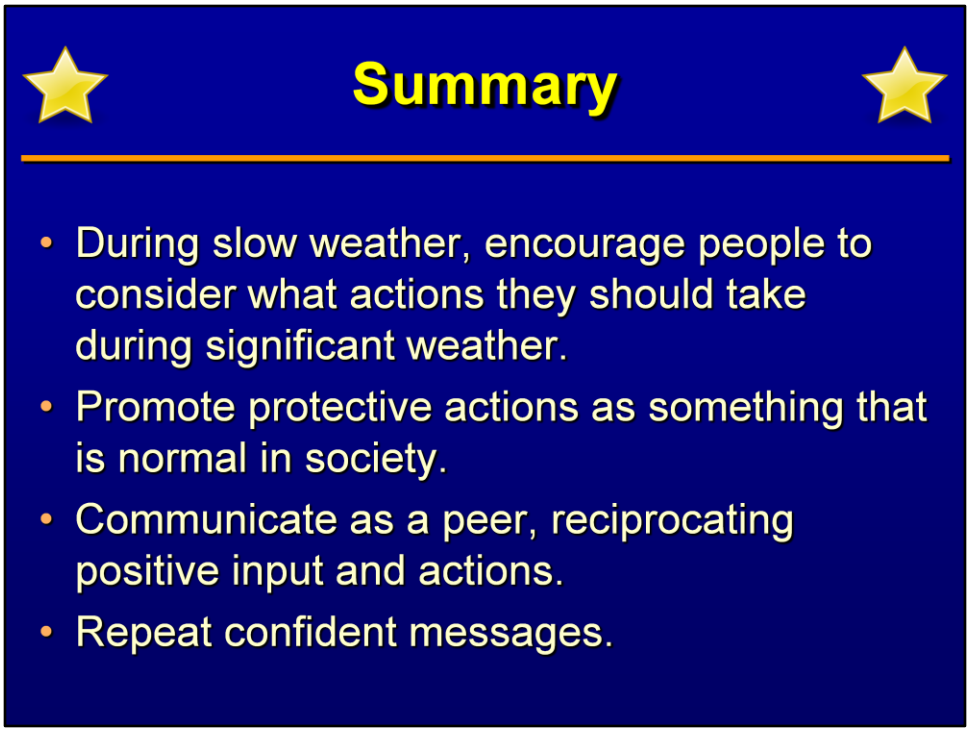
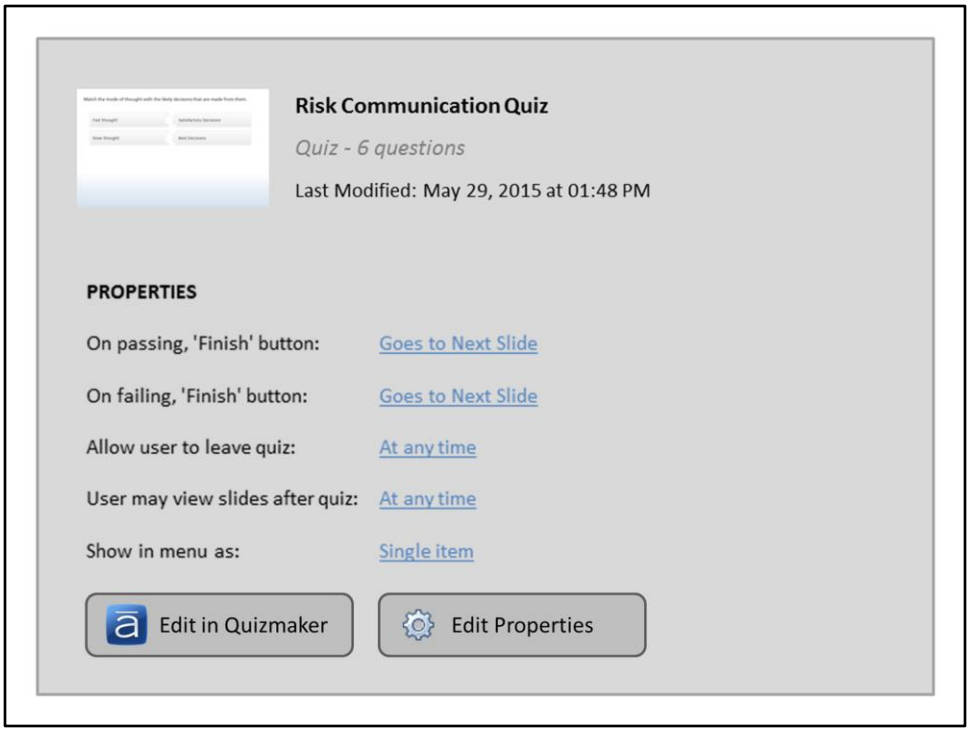
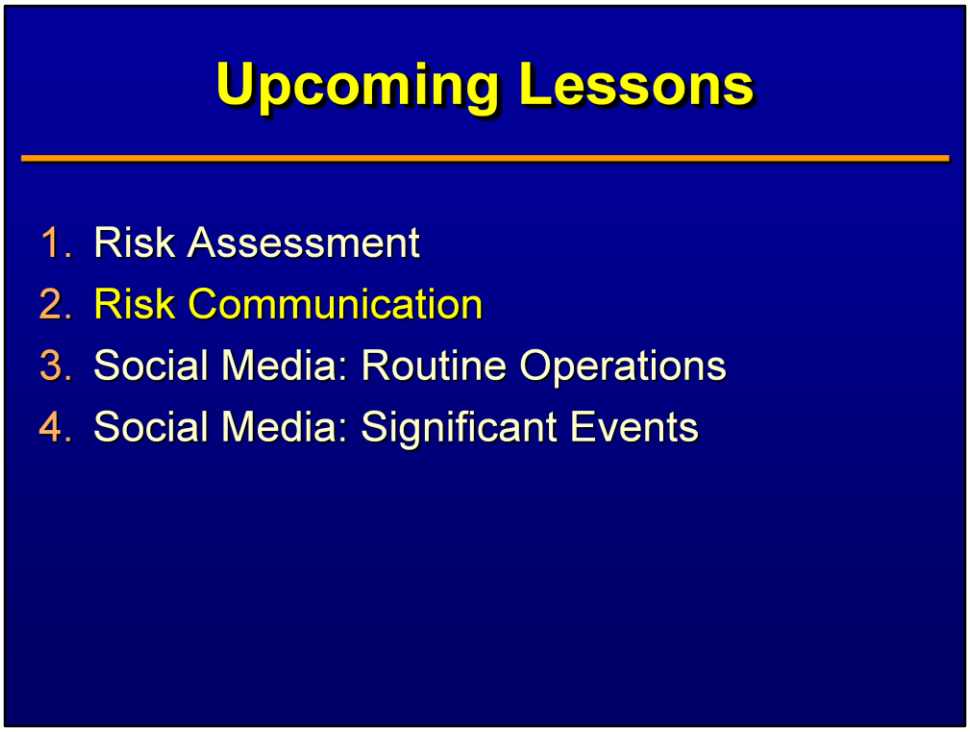


In summary, communications from the National Weather Service should encourage people to consider what preparation actions they should take while the weather is calm between significant events. Having people develop and think through their plans carefully will help them make better decisions when under severe time constraints. Suggesting appropriate actions to take and promoting them as something that is a normal action, given the circumstances, can help empower people to take action when the threat becomes personalized to their situation. Communicating as a peer, reciprocating the reports, and highlighting stories of good preparation actions will foster communication and report with the public that will promote consideration of National Weather Service guidance. Finally, show confidence in your message and repeat the message in multiple ways across multiple platforms to assure the most number of people will receive the information.



Please complete this quiz to assess your learning of the material. When you have passed the quiz, click "finish" to move on with the course.



As stated at the beginning of this lesson, this is the second of four lessons in this module. The next lesson covers the use of social media during routine operations.